amnesty international at georgia southern university

AIGSU

fall 2011 | spring 2012

report

Signatories

Aaron Wortham
Ahmed Bekhet
Alex Chen
Alexis Kemp
Ali Rice
Andre Lagoueyte
Angela Otumfuor
Anna Riley
Anni Rainio
Annie Jean Bolton
Ashley Boyer
Azell Francis
Nitin Philip
Brandon Anderson
Candace Linen
Casey Mohs
Chris Moses
Claire Torell
Corinne Bailey
Dan Rea
Dana Velasquez
David McIntosh
Delia Groh
Donald Ashton Jones
Donnies Craig Depew
Dora Su
Efadul Huq
Evin Marshall Hughes
Felicia Williams
Gustavo Rodriguez
Hasan Al-Sayegh
Ivar Lazo
Jay Bhatt
Jayne McGaughey

Office

Dr. Michael Pemberton
Advisor

Dr. Francis Desiderio
Advisor

Efadul Huq
President

Xavier Best
Vice-President

Kristina A. Rankine
Secretary

Jordan Logue
Treasurer, Public Relations

Felicia Williams
Volunteer Activities Coordinator

Dear friends,

My time as a member of Amnesty International at Georgia Southern has been a deeply enriching experience. Beginnning in the Fall of 2010, we set out to address a wide range of human rights crises. From the massive uprisings in Egypt, Bahrain, and Yemen to the imprisonment of political prisoners like Binayak Sen, the goal of AIGSU was to legally and intellectually combat the many violations of our most fundamental rights as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Numerous successes were gained through our advocacy. We were able to earn the signatures of over 200 GSU students in our petition drive to "Stop the Violence in Libya". We also helped to secure the release of internationally-known Indian political prisoner Dr. Binayak Sen and ensure fair treatment of J1 Visa workers in Hershey, Pennsylvania . In addition to illustrating the true force of collective action, these activities helped to foster substantive bonds with the student body around issues of paramount concern in a rapidly changing and "globalized" society.

Such connections were strengthened through our educational campaigns and community engagement activities. This included our extended collaboration with organizations such as the Muslim Student Association, STAND, the Student Abolitionist Movement, Education Under Fire, and even GSU faculty in attending to the needs of Statesboro's ESOL population. With the invaluable initiative of Nadia Dreid and Rajai Jabrah of MSA, we were able to hold a candle light vigil to honor the fallen revolutionaries of the "Arab Spring" as they fought against deeply entrenched tyrannies, many of them US-backed.

Dr. Dan Rea and Joe Goldstein lent their crucial support to shed light on the plight of Iran's Bahai population, a religious minority denied access to education. Many petition signings, teach-ins, and a public viewing and discussion of a Baha'i-themed documentary allowed us to bring this injustice to the attention of the student body. The fact that this campaign opened spaces for interfaith solidarity along with defense of fundamental human rights made it of particular importance.

As a local counterpart to advocacy of human rights, projects were also coordinated that addressed human rights violations on a local and national level. This included petitions calling for the GSU community to speak out against the police brutality carried out against Oakland's Occupy movement, an informed public forum on the realities of immigration in the US, and weekly interaction with the ESOL community in learning sessions. Results have also spilled over

Signatories

Jeremy Horne
Joe Goldstein
Jordan Logue
Jordan Rushing
Jose Cruz
Josue Bogran
Juan Diego Guevara
Judy Fields Davis
Julia Widbom
Kakhaber Tedliashvili
Kalle Reaves
Kevin Swails
Koushik Debnath
Kristina Aditi
Luke Stubbs
Luis Basave
Marc Silver
Marquez Anthony Purter
Mary Stephens
Matthew Humphrey
Megan Smith
Michael Brandon Boddie
Michael Garcia
Nadia Kamal Dreid
Nadim Khatib
Naima Othman
Nikolas Kolya Kalashnikov
Odari Jason Whyte
Olakunle Ola
Peter Simmons
Prasen Reddy Marella
Rajai Jabrah
Robina Rashid Bhuiyan
Ryan Scott Diffley
Sam Russell
Samay Bhusan
Shariar S. Emil
Sheila Gonzalez
Silvia Tamminen
Stefanie Frigo
Tao Yang
Tim Willis
Trey Burkhalter
William Tyler Horne
Winton Sharpe
Xavier Best

beyond the organization's projects. This can be observed in Efadul Huq and Jordan Logue's weekly radio program "Speak UP!" (91.9FM) where several of the topics touched upon in AIGSU advocacy are given a considerable measure of depth and clarity through educational interviews.

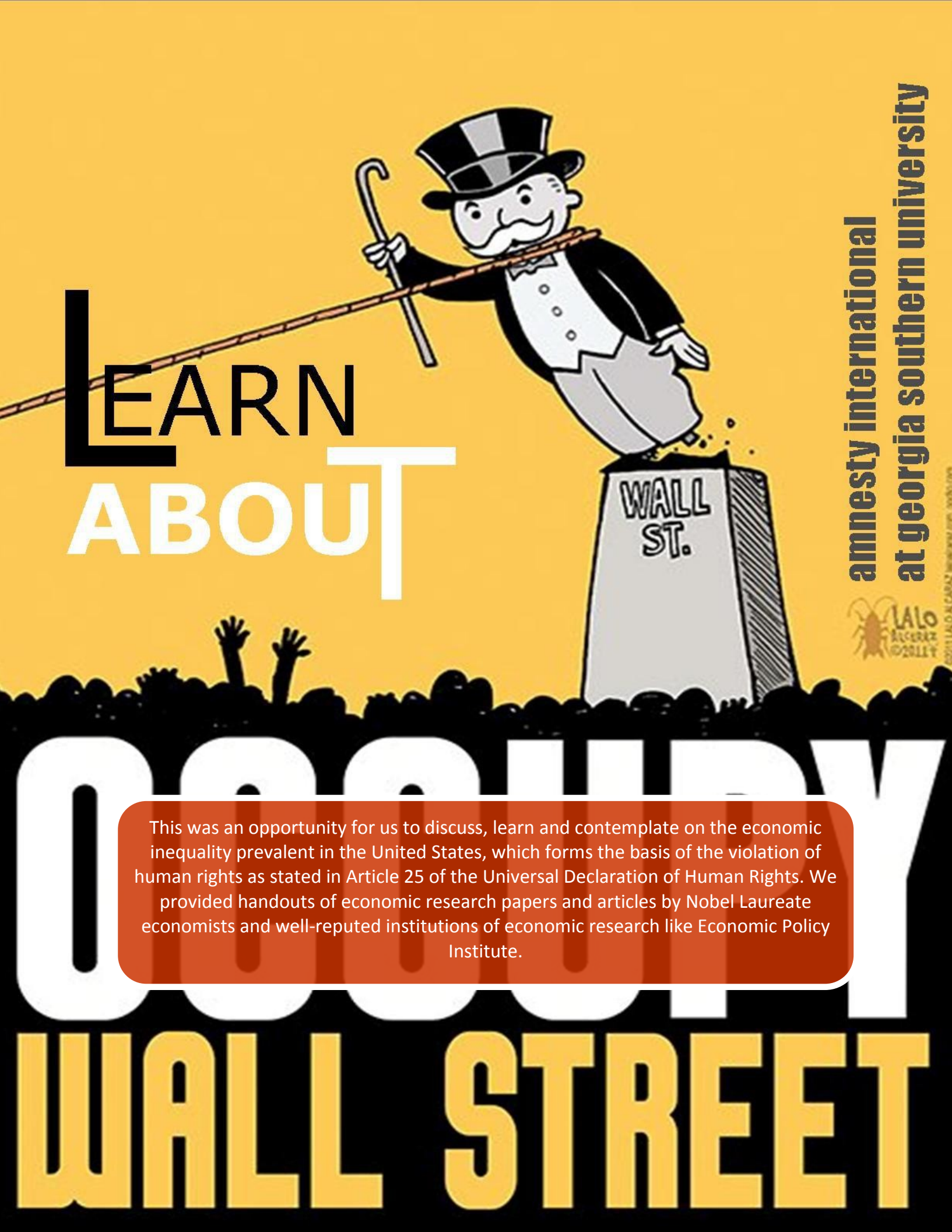
Together these activities demonstrate the undeniable force of conscientious citizens working together to forge a more just society. None of the great achievements that AIGSU has accomplished would have been possible without the dedicated and unwavering support of our signatories who found time in their busy schedules to extend their support to those deprived of the privileges we often take for granted. Apart from raising the consciousness of campus and community in Statesboro, AIGSU was formed to carry forth the principle that "the inherent dignity and . . . equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world," sentiments which take on a special urgency as our bombs continue to rain down of undefended civilian populations around the world.

As long as the discourse of force and arms takes precedence over that of understanding and international law, AIGSU has a monumental task to fulfill but I'm more than confident that the work we have done so far is only a prelude to much greater things to come.

In solidarity,
Xavier Best

Write-a-thon

We joined hundreds of thousands of people around the world in Amnesty International's Write for Rights Global Write-a-thon— the world's largest human rights event. Through letters, short messages of hope and more, we took action to demand that the human rights of individuals are respected, protected and fulfilled. We showed solidarity with those suffering human rights abuses, and are working to bring about positive change in people's lives.



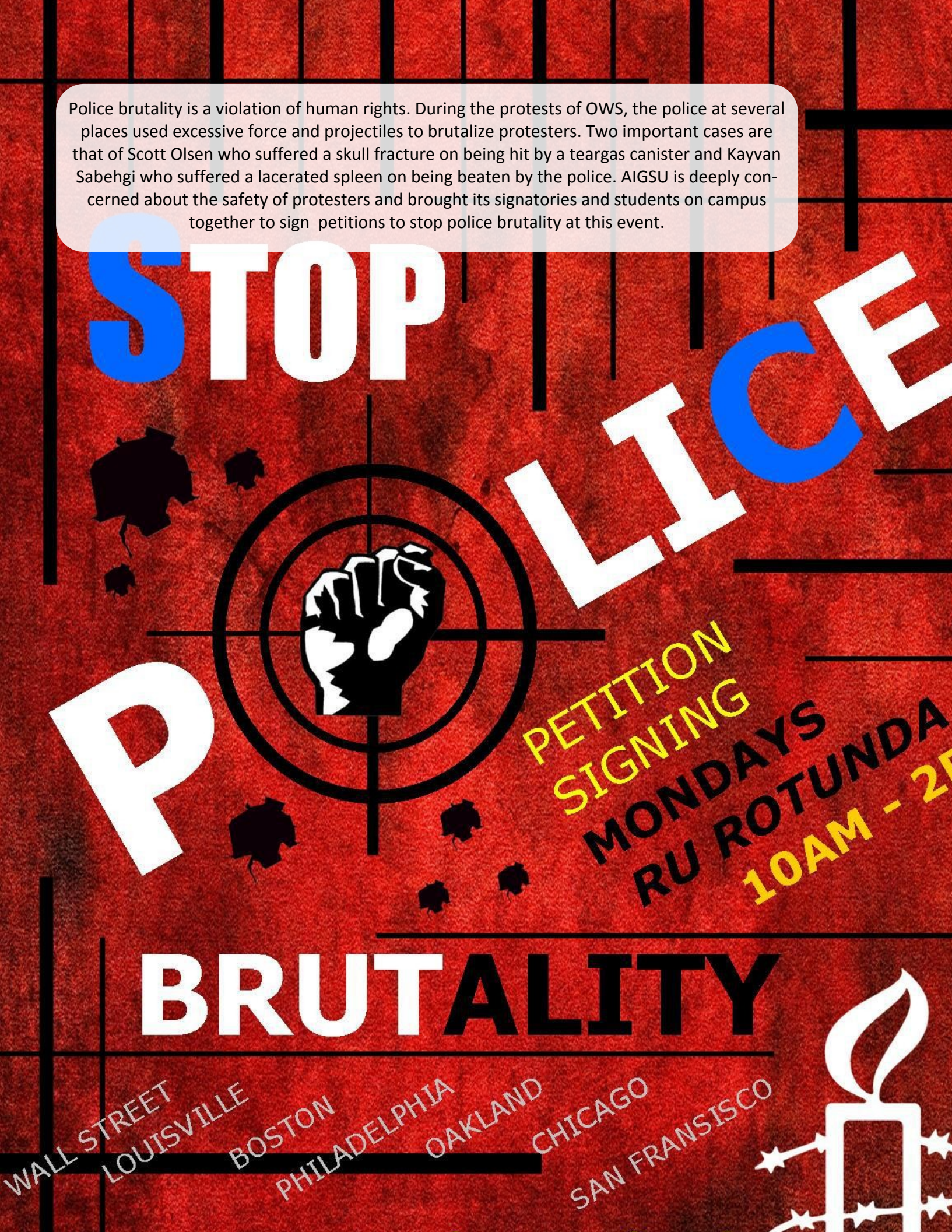
This was an opportunity for us to discuss, learn and contemplate on the economic inequality prevalent in the United States, which forms the basis of the violation of human rights as stated in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We provided handouts of economic research papers and articles by Nobel Laureate economists and well-reputed institutions of economic research like Economic Policy Institute.

Education Under Fire



At the Russell Union Rotunda, Bahá'ís of Statesboro and AIGSU collected over 200 sign-ups for an "Education Under Fire" petition supporting the educational rights of Bahá'í students in Iran. This petition calls on people around the world—especially university students, professors, and staff—to join Nobel Peace Prize Laureates Archbishop Desmond Tutu and President Jose Ramos-Horta in endorsing the right of all minorities—including the Bahá'ís —to a higher education in Iran. The Bahá'í Faith is a peaceful religion with no political agenda, which recognizes the unity of all peoples and all religions. The only crime of the Bahá'ís in Iran is practicing a religion different than the state religion. For being a minority religion, they have been denied the human rights of higher education and freedom of worship.

Police brutality is a violation of human rights. During the protests of OWS, the police at several places used excessive force and projectiles to brutalize protesters. Two important cases are that of Scott Olsen who suffered a skull fracture on being hit by a teargas canister and Kayvan Sabehgi who suffered a lacerated spleen on being beaten by the police. AIGSU is deeply concerned about the safety of protesters and brought its signatories and students on campus together to sign petitions to stop police brutality at this event.



Letter for Troy Davis

09/16/2011

State Board of Pardons and Paroles
2 Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, SE
Suite 458, Balcony Level, East Tower
Atlanta, Georgia 30334-4909

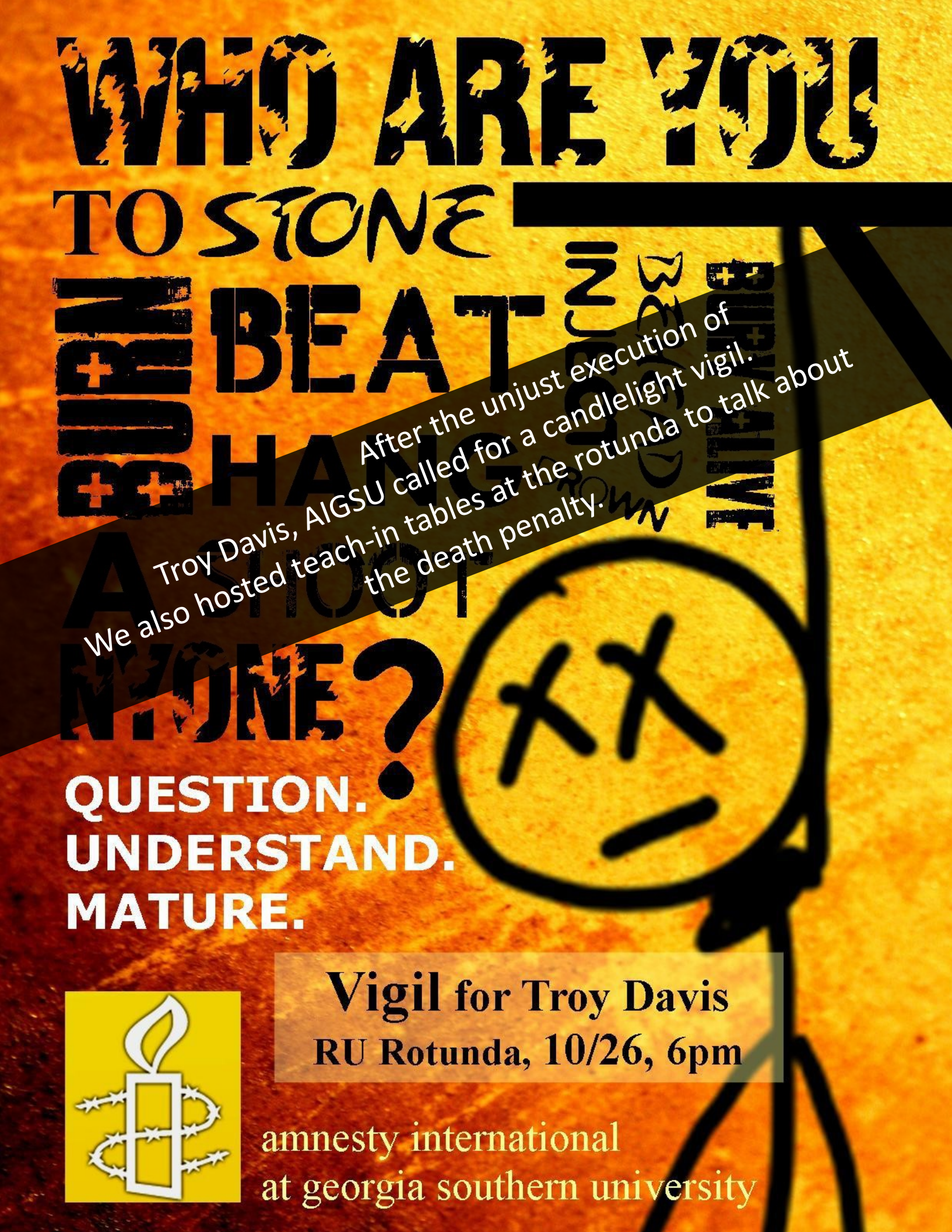
The State of Georgia's decision to execute Troy Davis on September 21, 2011 shocks us. If Mr. Troy Davis is executed, the state of Georgia runs the risk of making a farce out of core principles of US and international law.

Since his imprisonment, significant quantities of evidence have emerged that suggest that Davis is actually innocent of the crime for which he is being punished. Given the popular support that Davis has received in recent years, we are sure that you are familiar with many of the specific details. Seven of the nine witnesses who testified against Davis have since recanted and, to this day, there is no physical evidence linking Davis to the crime. Sharp opposition to this execution is widespread from NAACP president, Ben Jealous, calling the scheduled execution a manifestation of "our justice system at its very worst" to Amnesty International president, Larry Cox, pointing out that "there is still little clarity, much less proof, that Davis committed any crime." Notable world figures like former US President Jimmy Carter, South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and Pope Benedict XVI have also made public calls to grant Mr. Davis clemency.

To execute a man based on unsubstantiated allegations of murder in the face of overwhelming evidence that points to his innocence, would not only constitute a breach of the legal norms enshrined in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* but would establish a dangerous precedent as it relates to the treatment of other prisoners who may be facing execution around the world. Above all, a decision to execute Davis will de-legitimize the standing of Georgia criminal justice system.

For these reasons, Amnesty International at Georgia Southern University is imploring the Georgia state authorities to immediately terminate any plans to execute Mr. Troy Davis. Ending the life of an innocent man will not protect people from the tragic legacy of injustice. In fact, calling this execution 'justice' will dishonor the death of Officer Mark MacPhail. With your reason, compassion, and sobriety of mind we have great confidence that you, and the whole of the Georgia criminal justice system, will choose to do what is right and not what is *technically* legal or motivated by a misplaced desire for revenge.

Yours Sincerely,
Amnesty International at Georgia Southern University


WHO ARE YOU
TO STONE
BURN
BEAT
HANG
BURY ALIVE
BEHEAD
SHOOT
NONE?
QUESTION.
UNDERSTAND.
MATURE.
Vigil for Troy Davis
RU Rotunda, 10/26, 6pm
amnesty international
at georgia southern university
After the unjust execution of
Troy Davis, AIGSU called for a candlelight vigil.
We also hosted teach-in tables at the rotunda to talk about
the death penalty.

AIGSU collaborated with the Statesboro public library, Dr. Sabia from the Political Science Dept. and Voces Unidas to host ESOL classes for Hispanic adults and children in Statesboro. Every week, we held these sessions where GSU student volunteers participated to help Hispanic adults and children. We made this a two-way educational process. We invited students with Spanish minors or interest in Spanish so that they can learn Spanish as they teach English to the Statesboro Hispanic community. We received much appreciation from the adults who participated in this program and the student volunteers.

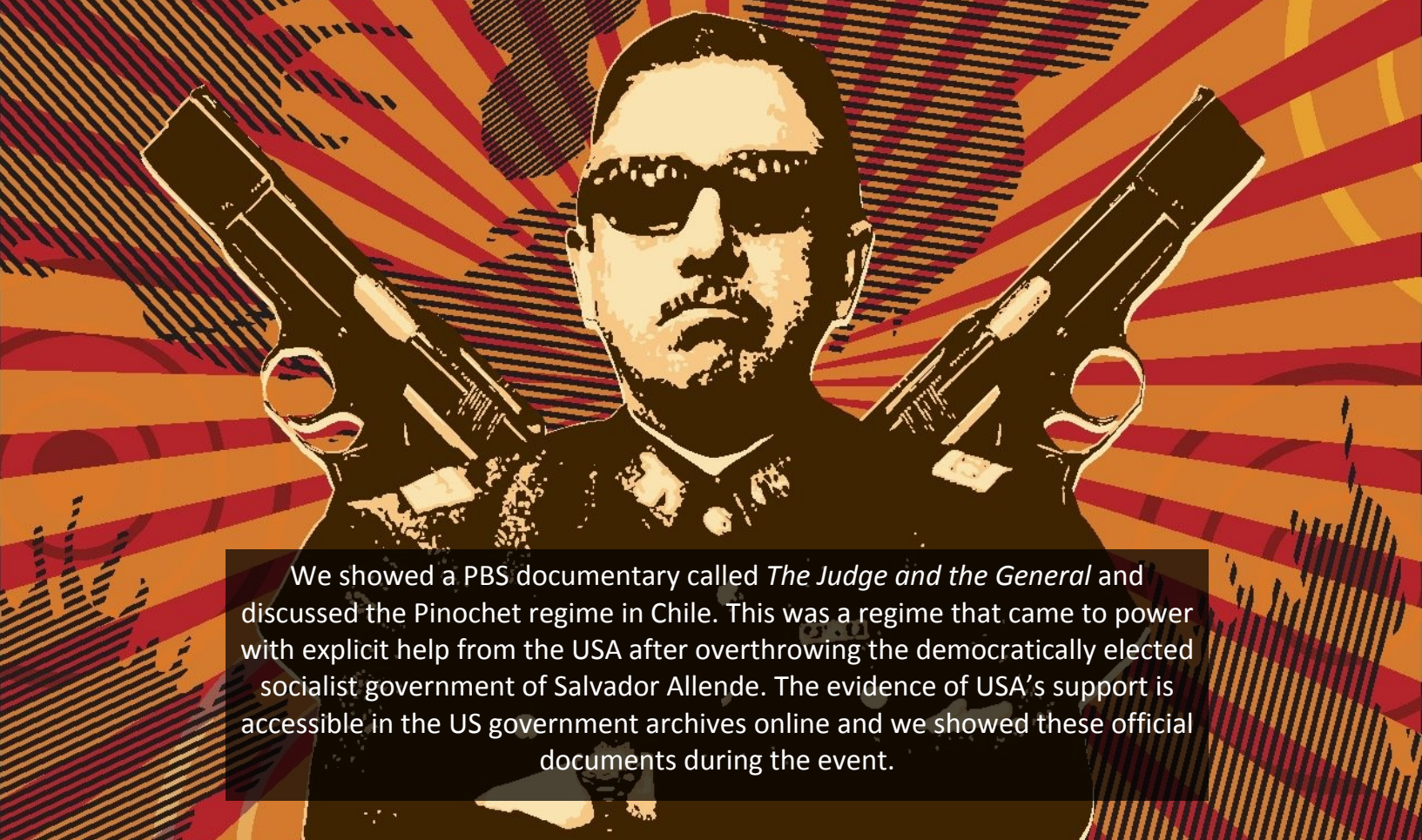
ESOL Volunteering Program

AIGSU & STAND

present

PROUD PATRIOT

DOCUMENTARY & DISCUSSION ON PINOCHET



We showed a PBS documentary called *The Judge and the General* and discussed the Pinochet regime in Chile. This was a regime that came to power with explicit help from the USA after overthrowing the democratically elected socialist government of Salvador Allende. The evidence of USA's support is accessible in the US government archives online and we showed these official documents during the event.

9/22

Thursday
6-8pm
Forest Drive Bldg
Room 1218

Letter to the CEO of the Hershey Company

09/01/11

Mr. John P. Bilbrey
CEO, The Hershey Company
100 Crystal A Drive
Hershey, PA 17033

Dear Mr. Bilbrey,

We are a student-led branch of Amnesty International – an organization dedicated to defending universal human rights. We are deeply hurt and concerned about the hundreds of J-1 visa guest worker program students who have been exploited at your packing plant in Palmyra, Pennsylvania.

You must be well aware that this workforce, comprised of college students from places as far as China, Turkey, and Ukraine, has taken a stand against what they see as a ploy of your management to deprive local Pennsylvanians of viable employment in order to capitalize on the cheap labor of these expatriates.

Following the strike of August 17th 2011, several testimonials and reports shocked us. Labor rights organizations such as *Labor Notes* have reported how the management at your plant has made abusive and unethical demands of the workers. In this report they cite how "workers were subjected to camera surveillance and were told they would be fired if they didn't keep up the pace." Students have made it known that they have been threatened with deportation if they failed to maintain a certain standard of productivity. As fellow students, it pains us to know that this policy of forced labor has inflicted a great deal of physical injury on the guest workers including "severe back pain, bruising, and numbness in their arms." Additionally, the physical strain is worsened by the financial strain of "wage theft", a policy whereby management pays the workers wages insufficient to cover their basic needs like housing and education.

Amnesty International at Georgia Southern University finds the manipulative behavior of your management reprehensible and inconsistent with fundamental principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and firmly established labor standards of the United States. We request you to use your influence and authority to bring an immediate end to all practices that violate the physical and mental integrity of your workers. This includes a swift decision to cease all threats of deportation, unwarranted surveillance, overly onerous production demands, and depriving workers of a fair wage. In bringing this case to light, the guest workers at your plant have demonstrated their understanding of elementary principles of democracy and the rule of law. With your empathy and cooperation, we strongly believe that this wrong can be redressed.

Yours Sincerely,
Amnesty International at Georgia Southern University

The 9/11 We Forget

Transcript of Speech at "Proud Patriot" Event

Efadul Huq

On November 3, 1970 Salvador Allende won the Chilean presidential election and formed the world's first popularly elected socialist government.

Soon, the USA launched economic blockades and the CIA funded Chilean right-wing offensive against Allende. The US government documents that detail these activities are now available in the government website for anyone to read. *[shows the website to the audience]* According to these documents, President Nixon "instructed the CIA to play a direct role in organizing a military coup in Chile to prevent Allende's accession to the presidency." In June 1970, Kissinger said about Allende's democratic presidency, *"I don't see why we need to stand by and watch a country go communist due to the irresponsibility of its own people."*

What was Allende's fault? There's a bunch of them. Allende created maternity care programs. He introduced larger pensions for widows, free lunch programs for children, and safety laws to protect workers in the factories. He initiated universal healthcare. Allende went on to nationalize basic industries, starting with the U.S. copper firms, and moved on to nationalize other resources. He raised workers' wages, froze prices and rents, provided milk for children, ordered hospitals to stop turning away those who could not pay for medical care, and provided tax and credit breaks for small and medium-sized businesses. Agrarian reform led to land redistribution among the landless. Food production and consumption rose. In response to Allende's efforts, Chileans increased the industrial output by 14% in 12 months. People joined work and the unemployment plummeted to less than 4%. Allende continued to pursue his 'criminal activities' of freeing and developing Chile as the months rolled on.

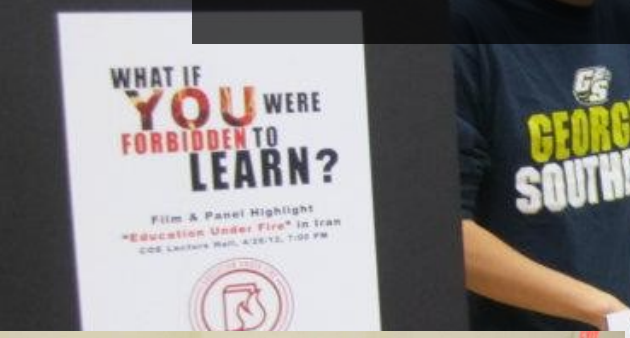
On September 11, 1973, a US-backed coup led by General Pinochet overthrew the government of Salvador Allende. In the wake of Pinochet's dictatorship and 'free-market' economy, countless Chileans 'disappeared'. Pinochet went on record saying he does not recognize the existence of the concept 'human rights'. Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger shared this disdain for human rights, responding to reports from the US ambassador to Chile who detailed Pinochet's bloodbaths by saying, "he should cut out the political science lectures." Soon after, school curricula were rewritten to glorify Pinochet and the 'free-market' economy and to vilify Allende and socialism. The imperialist powers went to a great extent to wipe out one of the most vibrant democracies in history. Today's event brings these facts to light, facts that are usually in the dark.

And on this month of remembrance, we are compelled to ask, *who* decides what we remember? *How* do we remember what we remember? Does our forgetting lead to the crimes our governments commit on a daily basis?



Tabling at Global Engagement Fair

We took this opportunity to engage the campus in discussing rights of Baha'is in Iran and also the police brutality in Occupy protests across the nation.This collaboration between Amnesty International of Georgia Southern University and the Baha'is of Statesboro at the Global Engagement Fair was very successful. Over 100 students came to our display table and inquired about the "Education Under Fire" (EUF) and the "Crossing Borders" events. Approximately, 75 students signed the EUF petition and learned about the follow-up showing of the EUF documentary and panel discussion on April 26 at Georgia Southern University.







Letter to Superintendant Brown of the Indiana Department of Correction

2/7/12

Indiana Department of Correction
302 W. Washington Street, Room E-334
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Superintendent Richard Brown:

Based on a report published by *Prison Radio* on February 6, 2012, it is our understanding that a prisoner located at the Secure Housing Unit of Wabash Valley Correctional Facility has been subjected to physical abuses that stand out as violations of the United States Constitution and international humanitarian law. According to this report an inmate by the name Shaka Shakur was confined in a 2x3 holding cell for 4 days and deprived of medical attention as punishment for beginning a hunger strike in January. Shakur was denied this medical treatment despite the fact that he suffers from a kidney condition and herniated disks, health concerns that had grown worse prior to his confinement. Additionally, Mr. Shakur was, on numerous occasions, forced to undergo "humiliating searches" which included procedures whereby officers would not allow Mr. Shakur to flush his toilet until was thoroughly searched of its contents.

The eighth amendment of the US Constitution explicitly forbids the resort to "cruel and unusual punishments" as a disciplinary tactic in the criminal justice system. Furthermore, these core principles of humanitarian law are reiterated and protected under the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*. In particular, IDOC authorities have violated Article 7 which recognizes that "no one shall be subjected to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment."

We are also appalled by reports that prison officials may have destroyed the political writings, books, magazines, legal resources, family photos, and eyeglasses of Mr. Shakur without presenting him with a confiscated property form. Not only do these actions constitute severe violations of Mr. Shakur's constitutional rights but they are in direct contravention of Article 19 (sec. 2) of the *International Covenant* which mandates that "everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression" and the right to "impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print."

These brutal attacks on basic human rights are incompatible with the legal and moral principles that find their expression in international humanitarian law. For these reasons, *Amnesty International at Georgia Southern University* is urging the Indiana Department of Correction to take the necessary corrective measures to bring an immediate end to the torture of Mr. Shakur, to grant him adequate medical attention, to end the invasive searches, and to return or compensate him for any property of which he has been deprived. Any attempt to circumvent these legal obligations will constitute a grave assault against the rule of law and the very precepts on which a sound criminal justice system is meant to operate. With the cooperation of IDOC we anticipate substantial changes that will allow these principles of fairness to be honored.

Yours Sincerely,
Amnesty International at Georgia Southern University

CROSSING BORDERS

A DISCUSSION ON IMMIGRATION

EVENT

Professors, business people, students, and the local community shared their views on immigration in an open forum. The panelists included Dr. Debra Sabia, Fatima Rea, Nadia Dreid, and Dr. Robert Yarbrough.

2/7 tuesday

6pm williams center



AIGSU

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY





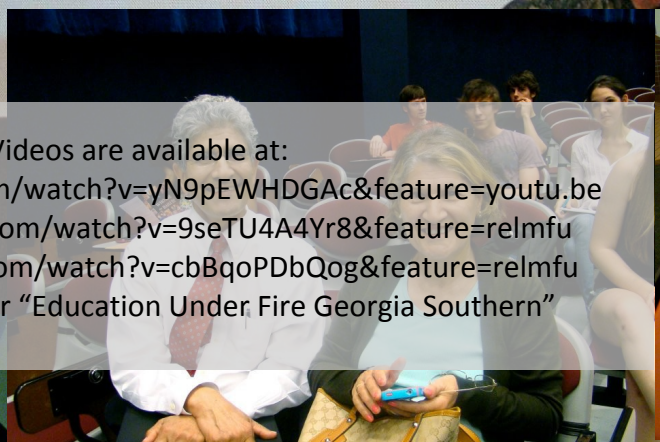
"Education Under Fire" Documentary and Panel Discussion

The "Education Under Fire" documentary and panel discussion stimulated a conversation about the universal human right of education and its denial to minorities in Iran, especially Baha'i students. The panel, moderated by Dr. Debra Sabia, featured two Iranian Bahá'ís, Evaz Fanaian and Nasrin Rouhani, sharing personal testimonies and a Christian Minister, Dr. Francys Johnson, and a GSU Professor of Education, Dr. Dan Rea, providing brief critiques of the Iranian government's discriminatory policies.





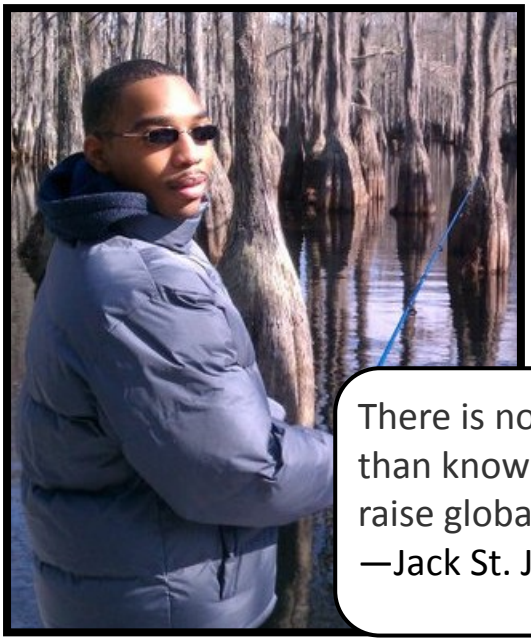






Videos are available at:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yN9pEWHDGAc&feature=youtu.be
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9seTU4A4Yr8&feature=relmfu
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbBqoPDbQog&feature=relmfu
Or search YouTube for "Education Under Fire Georgia Southern"

Messages from *2012-2013* Officers



There is nothing more pleasurable than knowing that you are able to raise global awareness to the masses. —Jack St. Jean, Treasurer

We're focusing on a inside out perspective this year. We're going to be very involved in the local community, but we're going to be raising awareness for the events happening around the world.— Jose Cruz, Vice-President and Volunteer Activities Coordinator



We don't want to host an event and have people look back and say, "That was a great rally" or "That was a great speech". We want to start a tradition of people coming together to celebrate our differences and fighting to protect those in need. — Samay Bhushan, Secretary

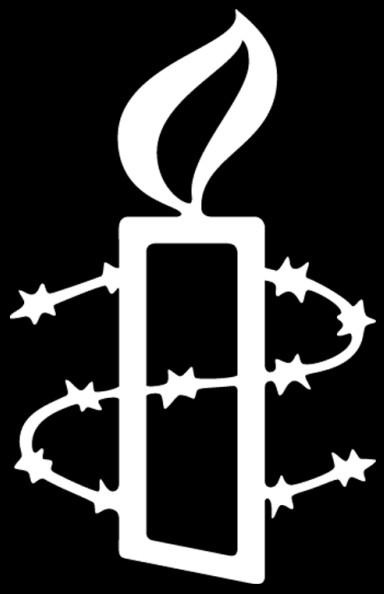




This year, we've already helped found two other Amnesty Chapters in Atlanta and Macon. We started coordinating with other student groups to promote equality and community unity. I want this to be the year that everybody knows who we are and what we are fighting for.—Jordan Logue, President

Financial Statement

	USD
Beginning Balance	132.63
Crossing Borders Electronic Equipments	- 25
Travel to State Conference	- 89.08
Income from T-shirt Sales	+ 85
Current Balance	**103.55**



Amnesty International at Georgia Southern University

1332 Southern Drive,
Statesboro, GA 30460, US
amnesty.gs@gmail.com
georgiasouthern.edu/orgs/aigsu